Broken Bird
By
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Her name was Kerry Fortesque. It was her 19th Birthday. She was tall, blonde, fair skinned and ever so slightly fatter than skinny. She was a girly girl and deliberately avoided learning about history, maths or science lest it spoil the ditzy charm that made her so popular.

Richard Heisenburg smiled, leaning on a lamp post outside her house, watching her pillow fight her peers, through an open window with binoculars. She was perfect.

When Kerry headed to college the next day to study Astrology, Richard made his introduction.

He calculated the moment precisely. He was dressed in a black 3 piece suit and walked at a 45 degree angle to her from a hidden starting position. He walked into her, hands in his pockets, Then he stopped and picked her up from the ground. He gave her a studied gaze and squeezed her just a little too hard and long to be acceptable and therefore forgotten. He licked his lips and leaned in to kiss her but stopped himself. “Now who are you to halt my gait? What enchanted beauty have I encountered?”

Kerry stared at him stunned.

Richard waited until he saw her lips twitch with the beginnings of speech before squeezing her right hand with his and pulling her in for a hug “Richard Heisenburg, mage alumni of House Kursh. Pleased to meet you. We should do lunch.”

Richard pulled back and paused, watching her and again he waited for the twitch of her lips that indicated she was about to reply before adding. “Shall we say tomorrow in the cafeteria?”

Again the wait and precise interruption. “Excellent, see you there”

Richard walked off on the same heading then waited until he was out of sight before enacting the next part of his plan. She had to know that he was a predator now. It was imperative that she entered into this agreement eyes open. Being a predator though was not enough, he had slipped a crucial fact to her that was easily missed, especially by one as deliberately stupid as Kerry. He was a mage.

He waited until the second hour of Kerry’s class before performing the spell.

Kerry sat in the breezy classroom looking at the white board as a middle aged woman with natty brown hair pointed out a constellation “Now this is Nublar Kasiris, the blood constellation-” as Kerry watched the constellation seemed to resolve itself into a new shape, stars coming to the fore from the background and dividing to form a new constellation as a cell shaded representation of Richard Heisenburg. The teacher’s voice droned. “Now this is the constellation of the mage Richard Heisenburg. Richard Heisenburg is a mage of House Kursh and as such is to be classed as lawful evil. House Kursh was founded in honour of the eldritch being known as the Bam-Kursh. It is said that the Bam-Kursh was so coldly manipulative and exploitative that the Great Farsh-nuke, Champion of Sylphs, has hunted him down ever since. If a mage of House Kursh ever

wants to see you, be very very afraid and run. Being targeted by a mage of House Kursh is said to be like being a fly suddenly lost in a tangle of webs. You can try to run but each path will be blocked until tiredness takes you and you lie down on the web, waiting for the spider to come eat you."

Kerry blinked and normality was restored. She was about to react and ask what had happened when the part of the lecture the spell replaced flooded into her mind and something told her to just act normal.

Kerry told her closest friends about the creepy guy who had looked at her like she was bacon and they accompanied her to see Richard Heisenburg at the cafeteria the next day.

"You came!" said Richard exuberantly from his position sitting sat a table in the cafeteria. A coffee sat to the right of him and Kerry noted that the smile looked unpleasant on him. It was the smile of a shark or a wolf. There was savagery in that smile.

Kerry nodded. "But I didn't come alone."

"Not as stupid as you try to make out are you?" said Richard getting up from his seat.

Kerry backed away and noticed that Shawna and Steve weren't moving. "What did you do to them?" she asked.

Richard smiled at the question. "I hoped you would bring friends. I would so have hated to motivate you to bring them before progressing with my plans."

Kerry watched as Richard removed a flick knife from his jacket pocket and cut the clothes from the frozen Shawna and Steve, leaving them completely naked.

"Is this supposed to intimidate me?" asked Kerry.

"Yes." said Richard casually as he sat down opposite her again. "I needed you to come to me with back up so that I could show you how useless it is. The next people you bring, and you will bring them, will die. Shall we talk?"

Richard indicated the seat opposite him.

Kerry asked. "Is everyone like this?"

"The entire universe, except for us two and the necessary biological functions are paused. At this moment we are the only two living beings in the universe." said Richard plainly as if he was saying. "Don't sit on that bench, the paint is wet."

Kerry sat in the chair opposite Richard and asked the obvious question. "What do you want?"

"To destroy you" said Richard with a smile. "I want to batter you with a baseball bat, electrocute you, stab you with icicles, roast you with an oven and pluck your eyes out with a toothpick."

Kerry swallowed. "Pardon"

“Miss Kerry, I am not of your universe.” said Richard “I am a resident of the Pan Multiverse Good Time Association and for some time now I have been searching for the answer to a problem. In the Pan Multiverse Good Time Association anyone can do anything, they have vampire clubs for the cannibals and psychopaths and presumed consent zones for the rapists to stalk without fear of legal action. It is truly a heaven but all too often violence is restrained by zones of acceptable behaviour and there are times when one just wants to destroy something beautiful. I think you are that something beautiful.”

“Fuck.” was the only word Kerry could say and even then it was said quietly and without emotion. The scale of the shit she was in was too large to comprehend.

Richard nodded. “Now you get it. You may relax for now, Kerry. I am not going to hurt you yet. First you must legally surrender all your rights and become my property.”

Kerry smiled, a new word crossed her lips. “Why?”

Richard chuckled to himself. “And now she plays the game.”

Kerry glared at him. “Why should I give myself to you? Why should I submit myself to destruction?”

Richard leaned close and smiled a wide smile. “Why indeed Kerry? What can the man in black offer you in exchange for eternal suffering?”

Kerry shivered. “What is it exactly you want to do with me?”

Richard leaned back “Once I legally own you I want to beat you until all your bones are broken and your face is a mess then I will guillotine you and mount your head. Then you will wake up in a new body with new clothes ready for me to beat you up and kill you but this time I won’t be beating you up it will be a paying customer and when they are done with you they will kill you, then you’ll resurrect only to face a gruesome death once more and the cycle will repeat ad infinitum.”

“No.” said Kerry decisively. “I will not undergo such torture. You may destroy me only once, if the price is right.”

Richard smiled again. “Clever girl. If I just wanted to destroy you and charge others for the privilege I wouldn’t need to keep killing you. You get one life and you get one death but I have the technology to make that death happen over again to a new Kerry who has yet to experience her one death. It’s like photocopying paper. I photocopy you then shred you so I may print off another copy and shred that.”

Kerry nodded. “That is much more workable but what can you offer me by way of recompense?”

Richard looked around the cafeteria as he said casually “Not every Kerry Foresque has to die. There are plenty of men who would pay good money for a woman as beautiful as you. Not to have sex with you understand. Just to look after you and look at you and stroke you. Human pets are all the rage where I’m from. You could get a very cushy lifestyle.”

Kerry stared at him. “Selling me as a pet is not something for me.”

Richard sighed and looked at her. “I am a mage of House Kursh it is not in me to be altruistic.”

Kerry smiled thinly. “And I am a Fortesque, it is not in me to accept bad deals. If you want to sell me as the perfect punching bag you need to think big in terms of rewarding me.”

Richard chuckled. “Oh but it will be sweet to grind your bones into ash. How does being queen sound?”

“Of where?” asked Kerry curiously.

“Where would you like?” asked Richard.

Kerry said. “I’ll have a think and give you a quote”

Richard giggled. “This is going swimmingly isn’t it?”

He noticed Kerry staring at him then said. “You probably want me to restart time now, don’t you? Very well. When you are ready come to the cafeteria I will be here.”

Time restarted and Richard said “Shawna, Steve, if I were you I’d go home and change into something more comfortable.”

Then Richard vanished.

Richard Heisenburg sped through time at a rate of a 1day a minute and arrived in corporeality to meet Kerry.

He paused time again and grinned wickedly at who he saw she’d bought to see him.

Richard disembowelled the two politicians.

Kerry handed him a brown envelope.

Richard opened it and read the contents “Yes, I think I can do this. It will cost a lot but then you offer me quite the product. Very well, are you ready to sign the contract signing over ownership?”

Kerry nodded. “One death per Kerry remember.”

Richard nodded. “Come, we have a bold future together”